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A
SIMPLE STORY.

IN
FOUR VOLUMES.



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SIMPLE STORY.

IN
FOUR VOLUMES.

BY MRS. INCHBALD.

==
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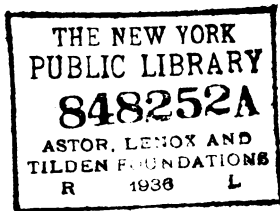
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ROY W. B.
CLUB
VIA RAIL

*A letter from Giffard, Lord Elmwood's
House Steward, to Miss Woodley.*

“ MY Lord, above a twelvemonth
“ ago, acquainted me he had permitted
“ his daughter to reside in his house ;
“ but at the same time he informed me,
“ the grant was under a certain restric-

“tion,

“ tion, which, if ever broken, I was to
“ see his then determination (of which
“ he also acquainted me) put in execu-
“ tion. In consequence of Lady Ma-
“ tilda’s indisposition, Madam, I have
“ ventured to delay this notice till morn-
“ ing — I need not say with what con-
“ cern I now give it, or mention to
“ you, I believe, what is forfeited. —
“ My Lord staid but a few hours yester-
“ day, after the unhappy circumstance
“ on which I write, took place; nor
“ did I see him after, till he was in his
“ carriage; he then sent for me to the
“ carriage door, and told me he should
“ be back in two days time, and added,
“ ‘ Remember your duty.’ That duty,
“ I hope, Madam, you will not require
“ I should mention in more direct terms.
“ — As soon as my Lord returns, I have
“ no doubt but he will ask me if it is

“ fulfilled, and I shall be under the
“ greatest apprehension, should his com-
“ mands not be obeyed:

“ If there is any thing wanting for
“ the convenience of yours and Lady
“ Matilda’s departure, you have but to
“ order it, and it is at your service—
“ I mean likewise any cash you may have
“ occasion for. I should presume to
“ add my opinion where you might best
“ take up your abode; but with such ad-
“ vice as you will have from Mr. Sand-
“ ford, mine would be but affirming.

“ I would also have waited upon you,
“ Madam, and have delivered myself
“ the substance of this letter; but I
“ am an old man, and the changes I
“ have been witness to in my Lord’s
“ house since I first lived in it, has en-

“ creased my age many years; and I
“ have not the strength to see you upon
“ this occasion. — I loved my deceased
“ Lady—I love my Lord—and I love
“ their child — nay, so I am sure does
“ my Lord himself; but there is no ac-
“ counting for his resolutions, or for the
“ alteration his disposition has lately un-
“ dergone.

“ I beg pardon, Madam, for this
“ long intrusion, and am, and ever will
“ be, (while you and my Lord’s daugh-
“ ter are so) your afflicted humble ser-
“ vant,

“ ROBERT GIFFARD.

“ *Elmwood House,*
“ *Sept. 12.*”

When

When this letter was brought to Miss Woodley, she knew what it contained before she opened it, and therefore took it with an air of resignation—yet though she guessed the momentous part of its contents, she dreaded in what words it might be related; and having now no essential good to expect, hope, that will never totally expire, clung at this crisis to little circumstances, and she hoped most fervently, the terms of the letter might not be harsh, but that Lord Elmwood had delivered his commands in gentle language.—The event proved he had; and lost to every important comfort, she felt grateful to him for this small one.

Matilda, too, was cheered by this letter, for she expected something worse; and the last line, in which Giffard said

he knew "His Lordship loved her." she thought repaid her for the purport of the other part.

Sandford was not so easily resigned or comforted — he walked about the room when the letter was shewn to him — called it cruel — stifled his tears, and wished to show his resentment only — but the former burst through all his endeavours, and he sunk into grief.

Nor was the fortitude of Matilda, which came to her assistance on the first onset of this trial, sufficient to arm her, when the moment came she was to quit the house—her father's house—never to see that, or him again.

When

When word was brought that the carriage was at the door, which was to convey her from all she held so dear, and she saw before her the prospect of a long youthful and healthful life, in which misery and despair were all she could discern; that despair seized her at once, and gaining courage from it, she cried,

“What have I to fear if I disobey my father’s commands once more? — he cannot use me worse. — I’ll stay here till he returns — again throw myself in his way, and then I will not faint, but plead for mercy. — Perhaps were I to kneel to him — kneel, like other children, and beg his blessing, he would not refuse it me.”

“You must not try.” said Sandford, mildly.

“ Who,” cried she, “ shall prevent my flying to my father ? — Have I another friend on earth ? — Have I one relation in the world but him ? — This is the second time I have been commanded out of the house. — In my infant state my cruel father turned me out ; but then, he sent me to a mother — now I have none ; and I will stay with him.”

Again the steward sent to let them know the coach was waiting.

Sandford now, with a determined countenance, went coolly up to Lady Matilda, and taking her hand, seemed resolved to lead her to the carriage.

Accustomed to be awed by every serious look of his, she yet resisted this ; and cried, “ Would *you* be the minister of my father’s cruelty ?”

“ Then,”

“ Then,” said Sandford solemnly to her, “ farewell—from this moment you and I part. — I will take my leave, and do you remain where you are — at least till you are forced away. — But I’ll not stay to be turned out—for it is impossible your father will suffer any friend of yours to continue here, after this disobedience. —Adieu.”

“ I’ll go this moment.” said she, and rose hastily.

Miss Woodley took her at her word, and hurried her immediately out of the room.

Sandford followed slow behind, as if he had followed at her funeral.

When she came to that spot on the stairs where she had met her father, she started back, and scarce knew how to pass it. —When she had — “ There he

held me," said she, "and I thought I felt him press me to his heart, but I now find I was mistaken."

As Sandford came forward, to hand her into the coach, "Now you behave well;" said he, "by this behaviour, you do not entirely close all prospect of reconciliation with your father."

"Do you think it is not yet impossible?" cried she, clasping his hand. "Giffard says he loves me," continued she, "and do you think he might yet be brought to forgive me?"

"Forgive you!" cried Sandford.

"Suppose I was to write to him, and entreat his forgiveness?"

"Do not write yet," said Sandford, with no cheering accent.

The

The carriage drove off—and as it went, Matilda leaned her head from the window, to survey Elmwood House from the roof to the bottom. — She cast her eyes upon the gardens too — upon the fishponds — the coach houses even, and all the offices adjoining — which, as objects that she should never see again — she contemplated, as objects of importance.

CHAPTER II.

RUSHBROOK, who, at twenty miles distance, could have no conjecture what had passed at Elmwood House, during the short visit Lord Elmwood made there, went that way with his dogs and gun in order to meet him on his return, and accompany him in the chaise back—he did so—and getting into the carriage, told him eagerly the sport he had had during the day; laughed at an accident that had befallen one of his dogs; and for some time did not perceive but that his uncle was perfectly attentive. — At length, observing he answered more negligently than usual to what he said,

Rushbrook

Rushbrook turned his eyes quickly upon him, and cried,

“ My Lord, are you not well ? ”

“ Yes ; perfectly well, I thank you, Rushbrook.” and leaned back against the carriage.

“ I thought, Sir,” returned Rushbrook, “ you spoke languidly — I beg your pardon.”

“ I have the head-ach a little.” answered he : — then taking off his hat, brushed the powder from it, and as he put it on again, fetched a most heavy sigh ; which no sooner had escaped him, than, to drown its sound, he said briskly,

“ And so you tell me you have had good sport to-day ? ”

“ No, my Lord, I said but indifferent.”

“ True, so you did. — Bid the man drive

drive faster—it will be dark before we get home.”

“ You will shoot to-morrow, my Lord ? ”

“ Certainly.”

“ How does Mr. Sandford do, Sir ? ”

“ I did not see him.”

“ Not see Mr. Sandford, my Lord ?—but he was out, I suppose—for they did not expect you at Elmwood House.”

“ No, they did not.”

In such conversation Rushbrook and his uncle continued till the end of their journey.—Dinner was then immediately served, and Lord Elmwood appeared much in his usual spirits ; at least, not suspecting any cause for their abatement, Rushbrook did not observe any alteration.

Lord

Lord Elmwood went, however, earlier to bed than ordinary, or rather to his bedchamber; for though he retired some time before his nephew, when Rushbrook passed his chamber door it was open, and he not in bed, but sitting in a musing posture, as if he had forgot to shut it.

When Rushbrook's valet came to attend his master, he said to him,

"I suppose, Sir, you do not know what has happened at Elmwood House?"

"For heaven's sake what?" cried Rushbrook.

"My Lord has met Lady Matilda," replied the man.

"How? Where? What's the consequence?"

"We don't know yet, Sir; but all the servants suppose her Ladyship will

not

not be suffered to remain there any longer."

"They all suppose wrong," returned Rushbrook hastily — "My Lord loves her I am certain, and this event may be the happy means of his treating her as his child from this day."

The servant smiled and shook his head.

"Why, what more do you know?"

"Nothing more than I have told you, Sir; except that his Lordship took no kind of notice of her Ladyship that appeared like love."

Rushbrook was all uneasiness and anxiety to know the particulars of what had passed; and now Lord Elmwood's inquietude, which he had but slightly noticed before, came full to his observation. — He was going to ask more questions;

tions, but he recollected Lady Matilda's misfortunes were too sacred, to be talked of thus familiarly by the servants of the family ; — besides, it was evident this man thought, and but naturally, it might not be for his master's interest the father and the daughter should be united ; and therefore would certainly give to all he said the opposite colouring.

In spite of his prudence, however, and his delicacy towards Matilda, Rushbrook could not let his valet leave him till he had inquired, and learnt all the circumstantial account of what had happened ; except, indeed, the order received by Giffard, which being given after Lord Elmwood was in his carriage, and in concise terms, the domestics who attended him (and from whom this man

VOL. IV. C had

had gained his intelligence) were unacquainted with it.

When the servant had left Rushbrook alone, the perturbation of his mind was so great, that he was, at length, undetermined whether to go to bed, or to rush into his uncle's apartment, and at his feet beg for that compassion upon his daughter, which he feared he had denied her. — But then again, to what peril did he not expose himself by such a step? Nay, he might perhaps even injure her whom he wished to serve; for if his uncle was at present unresolved, whether to forgive or to resent this disobedience to his commands, another's interference might enrage, and precipitate him on the latter.

This consideration was so weighty, it resigned Rushbrook to the suspense he

must endure till the morning; when he flattered himself, that by watching every look and motion of Lord Elmwood, his penetration, would be able to discover the state of his heart, and how he meant to act.

But the morning came, and he found all his prying curiosity was of no avail; Lord Elmwood did not use one word, one look, or action that was not customary.

On first seeing him, Rushbrook blushed at the secret with which he was entrusted; then contemplated the joy he ought to have known in clasping in his arms a child like Matilda — whose tenderness, reverence, and duty, had deprived her of all sensation at his sight; which was in Rushbrook's mind an honour,

nour, that rendered him superior to what he was before.

They were in the fields all the day as usual; Lord Elmwood now cheerful, and complaining no more of the head-ach.—Yet once being separated from his nephew, Rushbrook crossed over a stile into another field, and found him sitting by the side of a bank, his gun lying by him, and he himself lost in thought. He rose on seeing him, and proceeded to the sport as before.

At dinner, he said he should not go to Elmwood House the next day, as he had appointed, but stay where he was, three or four days longer. — From these two small occurrences, Rushbrook would fain have extracted something by which to judge the state of his mind; but upon the

the test, that was impossible — he had caught him so musing many a time before; and as to his prolonging his stay, that might arise from the sport — or, indeed, had any thing more material swayed him, who could penetrate whether it was the effect of the lenity, or the severity, he had dealt towards his child? whether his continuance there was to shun her, or to shun the house from whence he had banished her?

The three or four days for their temporary abode being passed, they both returned together to Elmwood House. — Rushbrook thought he saw his uncle's countenance change as they entered the avenue, yet he did not appear less in spirits; and when Sandford joined them at dinner, the Earl went with his usual cheerfulness to him, and (as was his custom

after any separation) put out his hand cheerfully to take his. — Sandford said, “ How do you do, my Lord ? ” cheerfully in return ; but put both his hands into his bosom, and walked to the other side of the room. — Lord Elmwood did not seem to observe this affront—nor was it done as an affront—it was merely what poor Sandford felt ; and he felt he could *not* shake hands with him.

Rushbrook soon learnt the news that Matilda was gone, and Elmwood House was to him a desert—he saw about it no real friend of her’s, except poor Sandford, and to him Rushbrook knew himself now, more displeasing than ever ; and all his overtures of atonement, he, at this time, found more and more ineffectual.—Matilda was exiled ; and her supposed triumphant rival was, to Sandford,

ford, more odious than he ever had been.

In alleviation of their banishment, Miss Woodley with her charge had not returned to their old retreat; but were gone to a farm house, no more than about thirty miles from Lord Elmwood's: here, Sandford with little inconvenience visited them; nor did his patron ever take notice of his occasional absence; for as he had before given his daughter, in some measure, to his charge; so honour, delicacy, and the common ties of duty, made him approve rather than condemn his attention to her.

Though Sandford's frequent visits soothed Matilda, they could not comfort her; for he had no consolation to

bestow that was suited to her mind—her father had given no one token of regret for what he had done. He had even inquired sternly of Giffard on his returning home,

“If Miss Woodley had left the house?”

The steward guessing the whole of his meaning, answered, “Yes, my Lord; and *all* your commands in that respect have been obeyed.”

He replied, “I am satisfied.” And, to the grief of the old man, appeared really so.

To the farm-house, the place of Matilda’s residence, there came, besides Sandford, another visitor far less welcome — Viscount Margrave. — He had heard with surprise, and still greater joy, that

that Lord Elmwood had once more shut his doors against his daughter. — In this her discarded state, he no longer burthened his lively imagination with the dull thoughts of marriage, but once more formed the idea of making her his mistress.

Ignorant of a certain decorum which attended all Lord Elmwood's actions, he suspected that his child might be in want; and an acquaintance with the worst part of her sex informed him, that relief from poverty was the sure bargain for his success. — With these hopes, he again paid Miss Woodley and her a visit; but the coldness of the former, and the haughtiness of the latter, still kept him at a distance, and again made him fear to give one allusion to his purpose: but he returned home resolved to
write

write what he durst not speak—he did so — he offered his services, his purse, his house — they were rejected with contempt, and a stronger prohibition given to his visits.

CHAP-

CHAPTER III.

LORD Elmwood had now allowed Ruthbrook a long vacation, in respect to his answer upon the subject of marriage; and the young man vainly imagined, his intentions upon that subject were entirely given up.—One morning, however, as he was attending him in the library,

“ Henry”——said his uncle, with a pause at the beginning of his speech, which indicated that he was going to say something of importance, “ Henry——you have not forgot the discourse I had with you a little time previous to your illness?”

Henry

Henry hesitated—for he wished to have forgotten it—but it was too strongly impressed upon his mind. Lord Elmwood resumed,

“What! equivocating again, Sir?—Do you remember it, or do you not?”—

“Yes, my Lord, I do.”

“And are you prepared to give me an answer?”

Rushbrook paused again.

“In our former conversation,” continued the Earl, “I gave you but a week to determine—there has, I think, elapsed since that time, half a year.”

“About as much, Sir.”

“Then surely you have now made up your mind?”

“I had done that at first, my Lord—if it had met with your concurrence.”

“You wished to lead a bachelor’s life, I think you said?”

Rush-

Rushbrook bowed.

“Contrary to my will?”

“No, my Lord, I wished to have your approbation.”

“And you wished for my approbation of the very opposite thing to that I proposed?—But I am not surprised—such is the gratitude of the world—and such is yours.”

“My Lord, if you doubt my gratitude——”

“Give me a proof of it, Harry, and I will doubt of it no longer.”

“Upon every other subject but this, my Lord, heaven is my witness your happiness——”

Lord Elmwood interrupted him. “I understand you—upon every other subject, but the only one, my content requires, you are ready to obey me.—I thank you.”

“My

“ My Lord, do not torture me with this suspicion ; it is so contrary to my deserts, that I cannot bear it.

“ Suspicion of your ingratitude!—you judge too favourably of my opinion—it amounts to certainty.”

“ Then to convince you, Sir, I am not ungrateful, tell me who the lady is you have chosen for me, and here I give you my word, I will sacrifice all my future prospects of happiness—all, for which I would wish to live—and become her husband as soon as you shall appoint.”

This was spoken with a tone so expressive of despair, that Lord Elmwood replied,

“ And while you obey me, you take care to let me know, it will cost you your future happiness.—This is, I suppose, to enhance the merit of the obligation—

gation—but I shall not accept your acquiescence on these terms.”

“ Then in dispensing with it, I hope for your pardon.”

“ Do you suppose, Rushbrook, I can pardon an offence, the sole foundation of which, arises from a spirit of disobedience?—for you have declared to me your affections are disengaged.—In our last conversation did you not say so?”

“ At first I did, my Lord—but you permitted me to consult my heart more closely; and I have since found that I was mistaken.”

“ You then own you at first told me a falsehood, and yet have all this time, kept me in suspense without confessing it.”

“ I waited, my Lord, till you should enquire——”

“ You

“ You have then, Sir, waited too long,” and the fire flashed from his eyes.

Ruthbrook now found himself in that perilous state, that admitted of no medium of repentment, but by such dastardly conduct on his part, as would wound both his truth and courage ;—and thus, animated by his danger, he was resolved to plunge boldly at once into the depth of his patron’s anger.

“ My Lord,” said he, (but he did not undertake this task without sustaining the trembling and convulsion of his whole frame) “ My Lord—waving for a moment the subject of my marriage—permit me to remind you, that when I was upon my sick bed, you promised, that on my recovery, you would listen to a petition I should offer to you.

“ Let

"Let me recollect," replied he. —

"Yes—I do remember something of it.

—But I said nothing to warrant any improper petition."

"Its impropriety was not named, my Lord."

"No matter—that, you yourself must judge of, and answer for the consequences."

"I would answer with my life, willingly — but I own that I shrink from your anger."

"Then do not provoke it."

"I have already gone too far to recede—and you would of course demand an explanation, if I attempted to stop here."

"I should."

"Then, my Lord, I am bound to speak — but do not interrupt me — hear

VOL. IV. D. 11

me out, before you banish me from your sight for ever."

"I will, Sir," replied he, prepared to hear something that would displease him, and yet determined to hear with patience to the conclusion."

"Then, my Lord," — (cried Rushbrook, in the greatest agitation of mind and body) "Your daughter" —

The resolution Lord Elmwood had formed (and on which he had given his word to his nephew not to interrupt him) immediately gave way. — The colour rose in his face — his eyes darted lightning — and his hand was lifted up with the emotion, that word had created.

"You promised to hear me, my Lord;" cried Rushbrook; "and I claim your promise."

He now suddenly overcame his violence of passion, and stood silent and

resigned to hear him ; but with a determined look, expressive of the vengeance that should ensue.

“ Lady Matilda,” resumed Rushbrook, “ is an object that wrests from me the enjoyment of every blessing your kindness bestows.—I cannot but feel myself as her adversary — as one, who has supplanted her in your affections — who supplies her place, while she is exiled, a wanderer, and an orphan.”

The Earl took off his eyes from Rushbrook, during this last sentence, and cast them on the floor.

“ If I feel gratitude towards you, my Lord,” continued he, “ gratitude is innate in my heart, and I must also feel it towards her, who first introduced me to your protection.”

Again the colour flew to Lord Elmwood's face; and again he could hardly restrain himself from uttering his indignation.

"It was the mother of Lady Matilda," continued Rushbrook, "who was this friend to me; nor will I ever think of marriage, or any other joyful prospect, while you abandon the only child of my beloved patroness, and load me with rights, which belong to her."

Here Rushbrook stopped—and Lord Elmwood was silent too, for near half a minute; but still his countenance continued fixed, with his unvaried resolves.

After this long pause, he said with composure, but with firmness, "Have you finished, Mr. Rushbrook?"

“ All that I dare to utter, my Lord, and I fear, I have already said too much.”

Rushbrook now trembled more than ever, and looked pale as death; for the ardour of speaking being over, he waited his sentence, with less constancy of mind than he expected he should.

“ You disapprove my conduct, it seems;” said Lord Elmwood, “ and in that, you are but like the rest of the world—and yet, among all my acquaintance, you are the only one who has dared to insult me with your opinion.—And this you have not done inadvertently; but willingly, and deliberately. But as it has been my fate to be used ill, and severed from all those persons to whom my soul has been most attached; with less regret I can part from you, than if this had been my first trial.”

There was a truth and a pathetic sound in the utterance of these words, that struck Rushbrook to the heart — and he beheld himself as a barbarian, who had treated his benevolent and only friend, with insufferable liberty; void of respect for those corroding sorrows which had imbittered so many years of his life, and in open violation of his most peremptory commands. — He felt that he deserved all he was going to suffer, and he fell upon his knees, not so much to deprecate the doom he saw impending, as thus humbly to acknowledge, it was his due.

Lord Elmwood, irritated by this posture, as a sign of the presumptuous hope that he might be forgiven, suffered now his anger to burst all bounds; and raising his voice, he exclaimed in a rage,

“ Leave

"Leave my house, Sir. — Leave my house instantly, and seek some other home."

Just as these words were begun, Sandford opened the library door, was witness to them, and to the imploring situation of Rushbrook. — He stood silent with amazement !

Rushbrook arose, and feeling in his mind a presage, that he might never from that hour, behold his benefactor more ; as he bowed in token of obedience to his commands, a shower of tears covered his face ; — but Lord Elmwood, unmoved, fixed his eyes upon him, which pursued him with enraged looks to the end of the room. — Here he had to pass Sandford ; who, for the first time in his life, took hold of him by

the hand, and said to Lord Elmwood,

“ My Lord, what’s the matter ? ”

“ That ungrateful villain,” cried he, “ has dared to insult me. — Leave my house this moment, Sir.”

Rushbrook made an effort to go, but Sandford still held his hand ; and said to Lord Elmwood,

“ He is but a boy, my Lord, and do not give him the punishment of a man.”

Rushbrook now snatched his hand from Sandford’s, and threw it with himself upon his neck ; where he indeed sobbed like a boy.

“ You are both in league,” exclaimed Lord Elmwood.

“ Do you suspect me of partiality to Mr. Rushbrook ? ” said Sandford, advancing nearer to the Earl.

Rushbrook

Rushbrook had now gained the point of remaining in the room ; but the hope that privilege inspired (while he still harboured all the just apprehensions for his fate) gave birth, perhaps, to a more exquisite sensation of pain, than despair would have done. — He stood silent — confounded — hoping that he was forgiven — fearing that he was not.

As Sandford approached still nearer to Lord Elmwood, he continued, “ No, my Lord, I know you do not suspect me, of partiality to Mr. Rushbrook — has any part of my behaviour ever discovered it ? ”

“ You now then only interfere to provoke me.”

“ If that were the case,” returned Sandford, “ there have been occasions, when I might have done it more effectually — when my own heart-strings were breaking,

breaking; because I would not provoke, or add to what you suffered."

"I am obliged to you, Mr. Sandford," he returned, mildly.

"And if, my Lord, I have proved any merit in a late forbearance, reward me for it now; and take this young man from the depth of despair in which I see he is sunk, and say you pardon him."

Lord Elmwood made no answer—and Rushbrook, drawing strong inferences of hope from his silence, lifted up his eyes from the ground, and ventured to look in his face: he found it composed to what it had been, but still strongly marked with agitation.—He cast his eyes away again, in confusion,

On which his uncle said to him —
"I shall postpone your obedience to my orders, till you think fit once more to
provoke

provoke them — and then, not even Sandford, shall dare to plead your excuse.”

Rushbrook bowed.

“Go, leave the room, Sir.”

He instantly obeyed.

While Sandford, turning to Lord Elmwood, shook him by the hand, and cried, “My Lord, I thank you—I thank you very kindly, my Lord—I shall now begin to think I have some weight with you.”

“You might indeed think so, did you know how much I have pardoned.”

“What was his offence, my Lord?”

“Such as I would not have forgiven you, or any earthly being besides himself—but while you were speaking in his behalf, I recollected there was a gratitude so extraordinary in the hazards he ran, that almost made him pardonable.”

“I guess

"I guess the subject then," cried Sandford; and yet I could not have supposed"——

"It is a subject we cannot speak on, Sandford, therefore let us drop it."

At these words the discourse concluded.

CHAPTER IV.

TO the relief of Rushbrook, Lord Elmwood that day dined from home, and he had not the confusion to see him again till the evening.—Previous to this, Sandford and he met at dinner; but as the attendants were present, nothing passed on either side respecting the incident in the morning.—Rushbrook, from the peril which had so lately threatened him, was now in his perfectly cool, and dispassionate senses; and notwithstanding the real tenderness which he bore to the daughter of his benefactor, he was not insensible to the comfort of finding himself, once more in the possession of
all

all those enjoyments he had forfeited, and for a moment lost.

As he reflected on this, to Sandford he felt the first tie of acknowledgement—but for his compassion, he knew he should have been at that very time of their meeting at dinner, away from Elmwood House for ever—and bearing on his mind a still more painful recollection, the burthen of his kind patron's continual displeasure. Filled with these thoughts, all the time of dinner he could scarce look at his companion, but with tears of gratitude, and whenever he attempted to speak to him, gratitude choked his utterance.

Sandford, on his part, behaved just the same as ever; and to show he did not wish to remind Rushbrook of what he had
had

had done, he was just as uncivil as ever.

Among other things, he said, "He did not know Lord Elmwood dined from home, for if he had, he should have dined in his own apartment."

Rushbrook was still more obliged to him for all this; and the weight of obligations with which he was oppressed, made him long for an opportunity to relieve himself by expressions.—As soon, therefore, as the servants were all withdrawn, he began :

"Mr. Sandford, whatever has been your opinion of *me*, I take pride to myself, that in my sentiments towards *you*, I have always distinguished you for that humane, disinterested character, you have this day proved."

"Humane, and disinterested," replied Sandford, "are flattering epithets

thets for an old man going out of the world, and who can have no temptation to be otherwise."

"Then suffer me to call your actions generous and compassionate, for they have saved me——"

"I know, young man," cried Sandford, interrupting him, "you are glad at what I have done, and that you find a gratification in telling me you are; but it is a gratification I will not indulge you with—therefore, say another sentence on the subject, and" (he rose from his seat) "I'll leave the room, and never come into your company again, whatever your uncle may say to it."

Rushbrook saw by the solemnity of his countenance, he was serious, and positively assured him he would never thank him more; on which Sandford took his seat again, but he still frowned, and it

was

was many minutes before he conquered his ill humour.—As his countenance became less sour, Rushbrook fell from some general topics he had eagerly started in order to appease him, and said,

“How hard is it to restrain conversation from the subject of our thoughts; and yet amidst our dearest friends, and among persons who have the same dispositions and sentiments as our own, their minds, too, fixed upon the self-same objects, is this constraint practised—and thus, society, which was meant for one of our greatest blessings, becomes insipid, nay, often more wearisome than solitude.”

“I think, young man,” replied Sandford, “you have made pretty free with your speech to-day, and ought not to complain of the want of toleration on that score.”

“ I do complain,” replied Rushbrook—
“ for if toleration was more frequent,
the favour of obtaining it would be less.”

“ And your pride, I suppose, is above
receiving a favour.”

“ Never from those I esteem; and to
convince you of it, I wish this moment
to request a favour of you.”

“ I dare say I shall refuse it.—How-
ever—what is it?”

“ Permit me to speak to you upon the
subject of Lady Matilda?”

Sandford made no answer, consequent-
ly did not forbid him — and he pro-
ceeded.

“ For her sake—as I suppose Lord
Elmwood may have told you—I this
morning rashly threw myself into the pre-
dicament from whence you released me
—for her sake, I have suffered much—
for

for her sake I have hazarded a great deal, and am still ready to hazard more."

"But for your own sake, do not," returned Sandford drily.

"You may laugh at these sentiments as romantic, Mr. Sandford, but if they are, to me they are nevertheless natural."

"But of what service are they to be, either to her, or to yourself.

"They are painful to me, and to her would be but impertinent, were she to know them."

"I shan't inform her of them, so do not trouble yourself to caution me against it."

"I was not going—you know I was not—but I was going to say, that from no one so well as from you, could she be told my sentiments, without the danger of giving her offence.

“ And what impression do you wish to give her, from her becoming acquainted with them ? ”

“ The impression, that she has one sincere friend—that upon every occurrence in life, there is a heart so devoted to all she feels, that she never can suffer without the sympathy of another—or can ever command him, and all his fortunes to unite for her welfare, without his ready, his immediate compliance.

“ And do you imagine, that any of your professions, or any of her necessities, would ever prevail upon her to put you to the trial ? ”

“ Perhaps not.”

“ What, then, are the motives which induce you to wish her to be told of this ? ”

Rushbrook paused.

“ D

"Do you think," continued Sandford, "the intelligence will give her any satisfaction?"

"Perhaps not."

"Will it be of any to yourself?"

"The highest in the world."

"And so all you have been urging upon this occasion, is, at last, only to please yourself."

"You wrong my meaning—it is her merit which inspires me with the desire of being known to her—it is her sufferings, her innocence, her beauty——"

Sandford stared—Rushbrook proceeded: "It is her——"

"Nay, stop where you are," cried Sandford; "you are arrived at the zenith of perfection in a woman, and to add one qualification more, would be an anti-climax."

"Oh!" cried Ruthbrook with warmth, "I loved her, before I ever beheld her."

"Loved her!" cried Sandford, with astonishment, "You are talking of what you did not intend."

"I am, indeed," returned he in confusion, "I fell by accident on the word love."

"And by the same accident stumbled on the word beauty; and thus by accident, am I come to the truth of all your professions."

Ruthbrook knew that he loved; and though his affection had sprung from the most laudable motives, yet was he ashamed of it, as of a vice—he rose, he walked about the room, and he did not look Sandford in the face for a quarter of an hour—Sandford, satisfied that he had jud

rightly, and yet unwilling to be too hard upon a passion, which he readily believed must have had many noble virtues for its foundation, now got up and walked away, without saying a word in censure, though not a word in approbation.

It was in the month of October, and just dark, at the time Rushbrook was left alone, yet in the agitation of his mind, arising from the subject on which he had been talking, he found it impossible to remain in the house, and therefore walked into the fields; — but there was another instigation, more powerful than the necessity of walking — it was the allure-ment of passing along that path where he had last seen Lady Matilda, and where, for the only time, she had condescended to speak to him divested of

haughtiness, and with a gentleness, that dwelt upon his memory beyond all her other endowments.

Here, he retraced his own steps repeatedly, his whole imagination engrossed with her idea, till the sound of her father's carriage returning from his visit, roused him from the delusion of his trance, to the dread of the confusion and embarrassment he should endure, on the next meeting with him. He hoped Sandford might be present, and yet he was now, almost as much ashamed of seeing him, as his uncle, whom he had so lately offended.

As loath to leave the spot where he was, as to enter the house, he remained there, till he considered it would be ill manners, in his present humiliated situation,

tion, not to show himself at the usual supper hour, which was immediately.

As he laid his hand upon the door of the apartment to open it, he was sorry to hear by Lord Elmwood's voice, he was in the room before him; for there was something much more conspicuously distressing, in entering where he already was, than had his uncle come in after him. — He found himself, however, re-assured, by overhearing the Earl laugh and speak in a tone expressive of the utmost good humour to Sandford, who was with him.

Again, he felt all the awkwardness of his own situation; but making one courageous effort, opened the door and entered. — Lord Elmwood had been away half the day, had dined abroad, and

it

it was necessary to take some notice of his return ; Rushbrook, therefore, bowed humbly, and what was more to his advantage, he looked humbly. — His uncle made a slight return to the salutation, but continued the recital he had begun to Sandford ; — then sat down to the supper table — supped — and passed the whole evening without saying a syllable, or even casting a look in remembrance of what had passed in the morning. — Or if there was any token, that shewed he remembered the circumstance at all, it was the putting his glass to his nephew's, when Rushbrook called for wine, and drinking at the time he did.

CHAPTER V.

THE repulse Lord Margrave received, did not diminish the ardour of his pursuit; for as he was no longer afraid of resentment from the Earl, whatever treatment his daughter might receive, he was determined the anger of Lady Matilda or of her female friend, should not impede his pretensions.

Having taken this resolution, he laid the plan of an open violation of all right; and determined to bear away that prize by force, which no art was likely to procure.— He concerted with two of his favourite companions, but their advice was, “One struggle more of fair means.”—

This

This was totally against his will; for, he had much rather have encountered the piercing cries of a female in the last agonies of distress, than the fatigue of her sentimental harangues, or elegant reproofs, such as he had the sense to understand, but not the capacity to answer.

Stimulated, however, by his friends to one more trial, in spite of the formal dismissal he had twice received, he intruded another visit on Lady Matilda at the farm.—Provoked beyond bearing at such unfeeling assurance, Matilda refused to come into the room where he was, and Miss Woodley alone received him, and expressed her surprise at the little attention he had paid to her explicit desire.

“Madam,” replied the nobleman, “to be plain with you, I am in love.”

“I do

"I do not the least doubt it, my Lord;" replied Miss Woodley: "nor ought you to doubt the truth of what I advance, when I assure you, that you have not the smallest reason to hope your love will be returned; for Lady Matilda is resolved *never* to listen to your passion."

"That man," he replied, "is to blame, who can relinquish his hopes, upon the mere resolution of a lady."

"And that lady would be wrong," replied Miss Woodley, "who should entrust her happiness in the care of a man, who can think thus meanly of her, and of her sex."

"I think highly of them all," he replied; "and to convince you in how high an estimation I hold her in particular, my whole fortune is at her command."

"Your

“ Your entire absence from this house, my Lord, she would consider as a much greater mark of your respect.”

A long conversation, as uninteresting as this, ensued; till the unexpected arrival of Mr. Sandford, put an end to it. — He started at the sight of Lord Margrave; but the Viscount was much more affected at the sight of him.

“ My Lord,” said Sandford boldly to him, “ have you received any encouragement from Lady Matilda to authorise this visit?”

“ None; upon my honour, Mr. Sandford; but I hope you know how to pardon a lover?”

“ A rational one I do—but you, my Lord, are not of that class, while you persecute the pretended object of your affection.”

“ De

“Do you call it persecution that I once offered her a share of my title and fortune—and even now, declare my fortune is at her disposal?”

Sandford was uncertain whether he understood his meaning—but Lord Margrave, provoked at his ill reception, felt a triumph in removing his doubts, and proceeded thus :

“For the discarded daughter of Lord Elmwood, cannot expect the same proposals, which I made, while she was acknowledged, and under the protection of her father.”

“What proposals then, my Lord?” asked Sandford hastily.

“Such,” replied he, “as the Duke of Avon made to her mother.”

“Miss Woodley quitted the room that instant.—But Sandford, who never felt

felt resentment but against those in whom he saw some virtue, calmly replied,

“ My Lord, the Duke of Avon was a gentleman, a man of elegance and breeding ; and what have you to offer in recompence for your defects in these ? ”

“ My wealth,” replied he, “ opposed to her indigence.”

Sandford smiled, and answered,

“ Do you suppose *that* wealth can be esteemed, which has not been able to make you respectable ?—What is it that makes wealth valuable ?—Is it the pleasures of the table ? the pleasure of living in a fine house ? or of riding in a fine coach ?—These are pleasures, a Lord enjoys, but in common with his valet.—It is the pleasure of being conspicuous, which makes riches desirable—but if we are conspicuous only for our vice and folly,

"fellow, had we not better remain in poverty?"

"You are beneath my notice."

"I trust I shall continue so—and that your Lordship will never again condescend to come where I am."

"A man of rank condescends to mix with any society, when a pretty woman is the object,"

"My Lord, I have a book here in my pocket, which I am eager to read; it is an author who speaks sense and reason—will you pardon the impatience I feel for such company; and permit me to call your carriage?"

Saying this, he went hastily and called to the servants; the carriage drove up, the door was opened, and Lord Margrave, ashamed to be exposed before his attendants, and convinced of the in-

utility of remaining any longer where he was, departed.

Sandford was soon joined by the ladies; and the conversation falling, of course, upon the nobleman who had just taken his leave, Sandford, unwarily exclaimed, "I wish Rushbrook had been here."

"Who?" cried Lady Matilda.

"I do believe," said Miss Woodley, "that young man has some good qualities."

"A great many," returned Sandford, mutteringly.

"Happy young man!" cried Matilda: "he is beloved by all those, whose affection it would be my choice to possess, beyond any other blessing this world could bestow."

"And yet I question, if Rushbrook is a happy man," said Sandford.

"He cannot be otherwise," returned Matilda, "if he is a man of understanding."

"He does not want understanding neither," replied Sandford; "although he has certainly many indiscretions."

"But which Lord Elmwood, I suppose," said Matilda, "looks upon with tendernefs."

"Not upon all his faults," answered Sandford; "for I have seen him in very dangerous circumstances with your father."

"Have you indeed?" cried Matilda: "then I pity him."

"And I believe," said Miss Woodley, "that from his heart, he compassionates you. — Now, Mr. Sandford," continued she, "though this is the first time I ever heard you speak in his fa-

vour, (and I once thought as indifferently of Mr. Rushbrook as you can do) yet now I will venture to ask you, whether you do not think he wishes Lady Matilda much happier than she is?"

"I have heard him say so," answered Sandford.

"It is a subject," returned Lady Matilda, "which I did not imagine you, Mr. Sandford, would have permitted him to have mentioned lightly, in your presence."

"Lightly! — Do you suppose, my dear, we turned your situation into ridicule?"

"No, Sir, — but there is a sort of humiliation in the grief to which I am doomed, that ought surely to be treated with the highest degree of delicacy by my friends."

"I don't

"I don't know on what point you fix real delicacy ; but if it consists in sorrow, the young man gives a proof he possesses it, for he shed tears when I last heard him mention your name."

"I have more cause to weep at the mention of his."

"Perhaps so — But let me tell you, Lady Matilda, that your father might have preferred a more unworthy object."

"Still had he been to me," she cried, "an object of envy. — And as I frankly confess my envy of Mr. Rushbrook, I hope you will pardon my malice, which is, you know, but a consequent crime."

The subject now turned again upon Lord Margrave ; and all of them being firmly persuaded, this last reception would put an end to every further intru-

son from him, they treated his pretensions, and himself, with the contempt they inspired— but not with the caution they deserved.

CHAP-

CHAPTER VI.

THE next morning early, Mr. Sandford returned to Elmwood House, but with his spirits depressed, and his heart overcharged with sorrow. — He had seen Lady Matilda, the object of his visit, but he had beheld her considerably altered in her looks and in her health; — she was become very thin, and instead of the vivid bloom that used to adorn her cheeks, her whole complexion was of a deadly pale — her countenance no longer expressed hope or fear, but a fixed melancholy — she shed no tears, but was all sadness. — He had beheld this, and he had heard her insulted by the licentious proposals of a nobleman, from

whom there was no satisfaction to be demanded, because she had no friend to vindicate her honour.

Rushbrook, who suspected where Sandford was gone, and imagined he would return that day, took his morning's ride, so as to meet him on the road, at the distance of a few miles from the castle; for, since his perilous situation with Lord Elmwood, he was so fully convinced of the general philanthropy of Sandford's character, that in spite of his churlish manners, he now addressed him, free from that reserve to which his rough behaviour had formerly given birth.—And Sandford on his part, believing he had formed an illiberal opinion of Lord Elmwood's heir, though he took no pains to let him know that his opinion was changed, yet resolved, to make him restitution

A SIMPLE STORY.

restitution upon every occasion that offered.

Their mutual greetings when they met, were unceremonious but cordial; and Rushbrook turned his horse and rode back with Sandford;—yet, intimidated by his respect and tenderness for Lady Matilda, rather than by fear of the rebuffs of his companion, he had not the courage to name her, till the ride was just finished, and they came within a few yards of the house—incited then by the apprehension, he might not soon again enjoy so fit an opportunity, he said, “Pardon me, Mr. Sandford, if I guess where you have been, and if my curiosity forces me to inquire for Miss Woodley’s and Lady Matilda’s health?” He named Miss Woodley first, to prolong the time before he mentioned Matilda; for though to name her gave him

him extreme pleasure, yet it was a pleasure accompanied by confusion and

"They are both very well," replied Sandford, "at least they did not complain they were sick."

"They are not in spirits, I suppose?" said Rushbrook.

"No, indeed," replied Sandford shaking his head.

"No new misfortune has happened I hope?" cried Rushbrook, for it was plain to see Sandford's spirits were unusually cast down.

"Nothing new," returned he, "except the insolence of a young nobleman."

"What nobleman?" cried Rushbrook.

"A lover of Lady Matilda's," replied Sandford.

Rush

Rushbrook was petrified. — “Who? What lover, Mr. Sandford?—explain?”

They were now arrived at the house; and Sandford, without making any reply to this question, said to the servant who took his horse, “She has come a long way this morning; take care of her.”

This interruption was torture to Rushbrook, who kept close to his side, in order to obtain a further explanation; but Sandford without attending to him, walked negligently into the hall, and before they advanced many steps, they were met by Lord Elmwood.

All further information was put an end to for the present.

“How do you do, Sandford?” said Lord Elmwood with extreme kindness; as if he thanked him for the journey which

which he suspected that he had been taking.

“ I am indifferently well, my Lord,” replied he, with a face of deep concern, and a tear in his eye, partly in gratitude for his patron’s civility, and partly in reproach for his cruelty.

It was not now till the evening, that Rushbrook had an opportunity of renewing the conversation, which had been so barbarously interrupted.

In the evening, no longer able to support the suspense into which he was thrown ; without fear or shame, he followed Sandford into his chamber at the time of his retiring, and entreated of him, with all the anxiety he suffered, to explain his allusion when he talked of a lover, and of insplence to Lady Matilda.

Sandford

Sandford feeling his emotion, was angry with himself that he had inadvertently mentioned the subject; and putting on an air of surly importance, desired if he had any business with him, that he would call in the morning.

Exasperated at so unexpected a reception, and at the pain of his disappointment, Rushbrook replied, "He treated him cruelly, nor would he stir out of his room, till he had received a satisfactory answer to his question."

"Then bring your bed," replied Sandford, "for you must pass your whole night here."

He found it vain to think of obtaining any intelligence by threats, he therefore said in a timid and persuasive manner,

"Did you, Mr. Sandford, hear Lady Matilda mention my name?"

"Yes."

ing to be back by dinner) he set off that night, and arrived at an inn about a mile from the farm at break of day.

The joy he felt when he found himself so near to the beloved object of his journey, made him thank Sandford in his heart, for the unkindness which had sent him thither.—But new difficulties arose, how to accomplish the end for which he came;—he learnt from the people of the inn, that a Lord with a fine equipage had visited at the farm, but who he was, or for what purpose he went, no one could inform him.

Dreading to return with his doubts unsatisfied, and yet afraid of proceeding to extremities that might be construed into presumption, he walked disconsolately (almost distractedly) about the fields, looking repeatedly at his watch,
I and

and wishing the time would stand still, till he was ready to go back with his errand completed.

Every field he passed, brought him nearer to the house on which his imagination was fixed; but how, without forfeiting every appearance of that respect which he so powerfully felt, could he attempt to enter it? — he saw the indecorum, resolved not to be guilty of it, and yet walked on till he was within but a small orchard of the door. Could he then retreat? — he wished he could; but he found that he had proceeded too far to be any longer master of himself, — The time was urgent; he must either be bold, and venture her displeasure, or by diffidence during one moment, give up all his hopes perhaps for ever.

With that same disregard to consequences, which actuated him when he dared to supplicate Lord Elmwood in his daughter's behalf, he at length went eagerly to the door and rapped.

A servant came—he asked to “Speak with Miss Woodley, if she was quite alone.”

He was shown into an apartment, and Miss Woodley entered to him.

She started when she beheld who it was ; but as he did not see a frown upon her face, he caught hold of her hand, and said persuasively,

“ Do not be offended with me.—If I mean to offend you, may I forfeit my life in atonement.”

Poor Miss Woodley, glad in her solitude to see any one from Elmwood House, forgot his visit was an offence,

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till

till he put her in mind of it; she then said with some reserve,

“Tell me the purport of your coming, Sir, and perhaps I may have no reason to complain?”

“It was to see Lady Matilda,” he replied, “or to hear of her health. — It was to offer her my services — it was, Miss Woodley, to convince her, if possible, of my esteem.”

“Had you no other method, Sir?” said Miss Woodley, with the same reserve.

“None;” replied he, “or with joy I should have embraced it; and if you can inform me of any other, tell me I beseech you instantly, and I will immediately begone, and pursue your directions.”

Miss Woodley hesitated.

"You know of no other means, Miss Woodley," he cried.

"And yet I cannot commend this," said she.

"Nor do I.—Do not imagine because you see me here, that I approve my conduct; but reduced to this necessity, pity the motives that have urged it."

Miss Woodley did pity them; but as she would not own that she did, she could think of nothing else to say.

At this instant a bell rung from the chamber above.

"That is Lady Matilda's bell," said Miss Woodley; "she is coming to take a short walk.—Do you wish to see her?"

Though it was the first wish of his heart, he paused, and said, "Will you plead my excuse?"

As

As the flight of stairs was but short, which Matilda had to come down, she was in the room with Miss Woodley and Mr. Rushbrook, just as that sentence ended.

She had stepped beyond the door of the apartment, when perceiving a visitor, she hastily withdrew.

Rushbrook, animated, though trembling at her presence, cried, "Lady Matilda, do not avoid me, till you know that I deserve such a punishment."

She immediately saw who it was, and returned back with a proper pride, and yet a proper politeness in her manner.

"I beg your pardon, Sir," said she, "I did not know you; I was afraid I intruded upon Miss Woodley and a stranger."

"You do not then consider me as a stranger, Lady Matilda? and that you

do not, requires my warmest acknowledgements."

She sat down, as if overcome by ill spirits and ill health.

Miss Woodley now asked Rushbrook to sit—for till now she had not.

"No, Madam," replied he, with confusion, "not unless Lady Matilda gives me permission."

She smiled, and pointed to a chair—and all the kindness which Rushbrook during his whole life had received from Lord Elmwood, never inspired half the gratitude, which this one instance of civility from his daughter excited.

He sat down, with the confession of the obligation, upon every feature of his face.

"I am not well, Mr. Rushbrook," said Matilda, languidly; "and you must

must excuse any want of etiquette at this house."

"While you excuse me, Madam, what can I have to complain of?"

She appeared absent while he was speaking, and turning to Miss Woodley, said, "Do you think I had better walk to-day?"

"No, my dear," answered Miss Woodley; "the ground is damp, and the air cold."

"You are not well, indeed, Lady Matilda," said Rushbrook, gazing upon her with the most tender respect.

She shook her head; and the tears, without any effort either to impel or to restrain them, ran down her face.

Rushbrook rose from his seat, and with an accent and manner the most expressive, said, "We are cousins, Lady Matilda—in our infancy we were brought

up together — we were beloved by the same mother — fostered by the same father," —

" Oh!" cried she, interrupting him, with a tone expressive of the bitterest anguish.

" Nay, do not let me add to your uneasiness," he resumed, " while I am attempting to alleviate it. — Instruct me what I can do to show my esteem and respect, rather than permit me thus unguided, to rush upon what you may construe into insult and arrogance."

Miss Woodley went to Matilda, took her hand, then wiped the tears from her eyes, while Matilda reclined against her, entirely regardless of Rushbrook's presence.

" If I have been in the least instrumental to this sorrow," — said Rushbrook,

brook, with a face as much agitated as his mind.

“No,” said Miss Woodley, in a low voice, “you have not—she is often so.”

“Yes,” said Matilda, raising her head, “I am frequently so weak that I cannot resist the smallest incitement to grief.—But do not make your visit long, Mr. Rushbrook,” she continued, “for I was just then thinking, that should Lord Elmwood hear of this attention you have paid me, it might be fatal to you.”—Here she wept again, as bitterly as before.

“There is no probability of his hearing of it, Madam,” Rushbrook replied; “or if there was, I am persuaded that he would not resent it; for yesterday, when I am confident he knew that Mr. Sandford had been to see you, he received

ed him on his return, with unusual marks of kindness."

"Did he?" said she—and again she lifted up her head; her eyes for a moment beaming with hope and joy.

"There is something which we cannot yet define," said Rushbrook, "that Lord Elmwood struggles with; but when time shall have eradicated,"——

Before he could proceed further, Matilda was once more sunk into despondency, and scarce attended to what he was saying.

Miss Woodley observing this, said, "Mr. Rushbrook, let it be a token we shall be glad to see you hereafter, that I now use the freedom to beg you will put an end to your visit."

"You send me away, Madam," returned he, "with the warmest thanks for the reception you have given me;
and

and this last assurance of your kindness, is beyond any other favour you could have bestowed.—Lady Matilda,” added he, “suffer me to take your hand at parting, and let it be a testimony that you acknowledge me for a relation.”

She put out her hand—which he knelt to receive, but did not raise it to his lips—he held the boon too sacred—and looking earnestly upon it, as it lay pale and wan in his, he breathed one sigh over it, and withdrew.

CHAPTER VII.

SORROWFUL and affecting as this interview had been, Rushbrook, as he rode home, reflected upon it with the most inordinate delight; and had he not seen decline of health; in the looks and behaviour of Lady Matilda, his felicity had been unbounded.—Entranced in the happiness of her society, the thought of his rival never came once to his mind while he was with her; a want of recollection, however, he by no means regretted, as her whole appearance contradicted every suspicion he could possibly entertain, that she favoured the addresses of any man living—and had he remem-

remembered, he would not have dared to name the subject.

The time ran so swiftly while he was away, that it was beyond the dinner hour at Elmwood House, when he returned.—Heated, his dress, and his hair disordered, he entered the dining room just as the desert was put upon the table.—He was confounded at his own appearance, and at the falsehoods he should be obliged to fabricate in his excuse; there was yet, that which engaged his attention, beyond any circumstance relating to himself—the features of Lord Elmwood—of which his daughter's, whom he had just beheld, had the most striking resemblance; while her's were softened by sorrow, as his were made austere by the self-same cause.

“ Where

“Where have you been?” said his uncle, with a frown.

“A chace, my Lord—I beg your pardon—but a pack of dogs I unexpectedly met.”—For in the hacknied art of lying without injury to any one, Rushbrook, to his shame, was proficient.

His excuses were received, and the subject ceased.

During his absence that day, Lord Elmwood had called Sandford apart, and said to him, that as the malevolence which he once observed between him and Rushbrook, had, he perceived, subsided, he advised him, if he was a well-wisher to the young man, to sound his heart, and counsel him not to act against the will of his nearest relation and friend.—“I myself am too hasty,”

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continued Lord Elmwood, "and, unhappily, too much determined upon what I have once (though, perhaps, rashly) said, to speak upon a topic where it is probable I shall meet with opposition. — You, Sandford, can reason with moderation.—For after all that I have done for my nephew, it would be a pity to forsake him at last; and yet, that is but too likely, if he provokes me."

"Sir," replied Sandford, "I will speak to him."

"Yet," added Lord Elmwood, sternly, "do not urge what you say for my sake, but for his — I can part from him with ease—but he may then repent, and, you know, repentance always comes too late with me."

"My Lord, I will exert all the efforts in my power for his welfare.—But what

is

is the subject on which he has refused to comply with your desires?"

"Marriage—have not I told you?"

"Not a word."

"I wish him to marry, that I may then conclude the deeds in respect to my estate. — And the only child of Sir William Winterston (a rich heiress) was the wife I meant to propose; but from his indifference to all I have said on the occasion, I have not yet mentioned her name to him; you may."

"I will, my Lord, and use all my persuasion towards his obedience; and you shall have, at least, a faithful account of what he says."

Sandford the next morning sought an opportunity of being alone with Rushbrook—he then plainly repeated to him what Lord Elmwood had said, and saw

him listen to it all, and heard him answer with the most tranquil resolution, "That he would do any thing to preserve the friendship and patronage of his uncle—but marry."

"What can be the reason?" asked Sandford—though he guessed.

"A reason I cannot give to Lord Elmwood."

"Then do not give it to me, for I have promised to tell him every thing you say to me."

"And every thing I *have* said?" asked Ruffbrook hastily.

"As to what you have said, I don't know whether it has made impression enough on my memory, to enable me to repeat it."

"I am glad it has not."

"And my answer to your uncle, is

to be simply, that you will not obey him?"

"I should hope, Mr. Sandford, that you would express it in better terms." Le

"Tell me the terms, and I will be exact."

Rushbrook struck his forehead, and walked about the room.

"Am I to give him any reason for your disobeying him?"

"I tell you again, that I dare not name the cause."

"Then why do you submit to a power you are ashamed to own?"

"I am not ashamed—I glory in it—Are you ashamed of your esteem for Lady Matilda?"

"Oh! if she is the cause of your disobedience, be assured I shall not mention it; for I am forbid to name her."

"And

And as that is the case, I need not fear to speak plainly to you. — I love Eddy Martin — ~~very~~, perhaps, most acquainted with love, it may be only pity — and if so, pity is the most pleasing passion that ever possessed a human heart, and I would not change it for all her father's estates."

"Pity, then, gives rise to very different sensations—for I pity you, and that sensation I would gladly exchange for approbation."

"If you really feel compassion for me, and I believe you do, contrive some means by your answers to Lord Elmwood to pacify him, without involving me.—Hint at my affections being engaged, but not to whom; and add, that I have given my word, if he will allow me a short time, a year or two only, I will, during that period, try to disengage them, and use all my power to render

H 2

myself

myself worthy of the union for which he designs me."

"And this is not only your solemn promise — but your fixed determination?"

"Nay, why will you search my heart to the bottom, when the surface ought to content you?"

"If you cannot resolve on what you have proposed, why do you ask this time of your uncle? For should he allow it you, at the expiration, your disobedience to his commands will be less pardonable than it is now."

"Within a year, Mr. Sandford, who can tell what strange events may not occur, to change all our prospects? Even my passion may decline."

"In that expectation, then—the failure of which you yourself must answer

for—I will repeat as much of this discourse as shall be proper.”

Here Rushbrook communicated his having been to see Lady Matilda, for which Sandford reproved him, but in less rigorous terms than he generally used in his reproofs; and Rushbrook, by his entreaties, now gained the intelligence who the nobleman was who had addressed Matilda, and on what views; but was restrained to patience, by Sandford's arguments and threats.

Upon the subject of this marriage, Sandford met his patron, without having determined exactly what to say, but rested on the temper in which he should find him.

At the commencement of the conversation he said, "Rushbrook begged for time."

"I have given him time, have I not?" cried Lord Elmwood. "What can be the reason of his thus trifling with me?"

Sandford replied, "My Lord, young men are frequently romantic in their notions of love, and think it impossible to have a sincere affection, where their own inclinations do not first point out the choice."

"If he is in love," answered Lord Elmwood, "let him take the object, and leave my house and me for ever. — Nor under this destiny can he have any claim to pity; for genuine love will make him happy in banishment, in poverty, or in sickness: it makes the poor man happy as the rich, the fool blest as the wise." —

The

The sincerity with which Lord Elmwood had loved, was expressed more than in words, as he said this.

"Your Lordship is talking," replied Sandford, "of the passion in its most refined and predominant sense; while I may possibly be speaking of a mere phantom, that has led this young man astray."

"Whatever it be," returned Lord Elmwood, "let him and his friends weigh the case well, and act for the best — so shall I."

"His friends, my Lord? — What friends; or what friend has he upon earth but you?"

"Then why will he not submit to my advice; or himself give me a substantial reason why he cannot?"

"Because there may be friendship

H 4

without

without familiarity—and so it is between him and you.”

“ That cannot be ; for I have condescended to talk to him in the most familiar terms.”

“ To condescend, my Lord, is *not* to be familiar.”

“ Then come, Sir, let us be on an equal footing through you. — And now speak out *his* thoughts freely, and hear mine in return.”

“ Why then, he begs a respite for a year or two.”

“ On what pretence ?”

“ To me, it was preference of a single life—but I suspect it is—what he imagines to be love—and for some object whom he thinks your Lordship would disapprove.”

“ He has not, then, actually confessed this to you ?”

“ If

“ If he has, it was drawn from him by such means, that I am not warranted to say it in direct words.”

“ I have entered into no contract, no agreement on his account with the friends of the lady I have pointed out,” said Lord Elmwood ; “ nothing beyond implications have passed betwixt her family and myself at present ; and if the person on whom he has fixed his affections, should not be in a situation absolutely contrary to my wishes, I may, perhaps, confirm his choice.”

That moment Sandford’s courage prompted him to name Lady Matilda, but his discretion opposed — however, in the various changes of his countenance from the conflict, it was plain to discern that he wished to say more than he dared.

On which Lord Elmwood cried,
“ Speak

"Speak on, Sandford — what are you afraid of?"

"Of you, my Lord."

He started.

Sandford went on — "I know no tie — no bond — no innocence, that is a protection from your resentment."

"You are right," he replied, significantly.

"Then how, my Lord, can you encourage me to speak on, when that which I perhaps would say, may offend you to hear?"

"To what, and whither are you changing our subject?" said Lord Elmwood. — "But, Sir, if you know my resentful and relentless temper, you surely know how to shun it."

"Not, and speak plainly."

"Then diffemble."

"No,

"No, I'll not do that—but I'll be
filent."

"A new parade of submission.—You
are more tormenting to me than any one
I have about me—Constantly on the
verge of disobeying my commands, that
you may recede, and gain my good will
by your forbearance.—But know, Mr.
Sandford, that I will not suffer this much
longer.—If you chuse in every conver-
sation we have together (though the most
remote from such a subject) to think of
my daughter, you must either banish your
thoughts, or conceal them—not by one
sign, one item, remind me of her."

"Your daughter did you call her?—
Can you call yourself her father?"

"I do, Sir—but I was likewise the
husband of her mother.—And, as that
husband, I solemnly swear."—He was
proceeding with violence.

"Oh!

“ Oh ! my Lord,” cried Sandford, interrupting him, with his hands clasped in the most fervent supplication—“ Oh ! do not let me draw upon her one oath more of your eternal displeasure — I’ll kneel to beg that you will drop the subject.”

The inclination he made with his knees bent to the ground, stopped Lord Elmwood instantly.— But though it broke in upon his words, it did not alter one angry look — his eyes darted, and his lips trembled with, indignation.

Sandford, in order to appease him, bowed and offered to withdraw, hoping to be recalled. — He wished in vain — Lord Elmwood’s eyes followed him to the door, expressive of pleasure at his absence.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE companions and counsellors of Lord Margrave, who had so prudently advised gentle methods in the pursuit of his passion, while there was left any hope of their success; now, convinced there was none, as strenuously commended open violence; — and sheltered under the consideration, that their depredations were to be practised upon a defenceless woman, who had not one protector, except an old priest, the subject of their ridicule; — assured likewise from the influence of Lord Mulgrave's wealth, that all inferior consequences could be overborne, they saw no room for fears on
any

170 A SIMPLE STORY

any side, and what they wished to execute, with care and skill premeditated.

When their scheme was mature for performance, three of his chosen companions, and three servants, trained in all the villainous exploits of their masters, set off for the habitation of poor Matilda, and arrived there about the twilight of the evening.

Near four hours after that time (just as the family were going to bed) they came up to the doors of the house; and rapping violently, gave the alarm of fire, conjuring all the inhabitants to make their way out immediately, as they would save their lives.

The family consisted of few persons, all of whom ran instantly to the doors and opened them; on which two

mea

more rushed in, and with the plea of saving Lady Matilda from the pretended flames, caught her in their arms, and carried her off; while all the deceived people of the house, running eagerly to save themselves, paid no regard to her, till looking for the cause for which they had been terrified, they perceived the stratagem, and the fatal consequences.

Amidst the complaints, the sorrow, and the affright of the people of the farm, Miss Woodley's sensations wanted a name—terror and anguish give but a faint description of what she suffered—something like the approach of death stole over her senses, and she sat like one petrified with horror.—She had no doubt who was the perpetrator of this wickedness; but

How was she to follow? how effect a rescue?

The circumstances of this event, as soon as the people had time to call up their recollection, were sent to a neighbouring magistrate; but little could be hoped from that.—Who was to swear to the robber?—Who undertake to find him out!—Miss Woodley thought of Rushbrook, of Sandford, of Lord Elmwood, but what could she hope from the want of power in the two former?—what from the latter, for the want of will?—Now stupified, and now distracted, she walked about the house incessantly, begging for instructions how to act, or how to forget her misery.

A tenant of Lord Elmwood's, who occupied a little farm near to that where
Lady

Lady Matilda lived, and who was well acquainted with the whole history of her's and her mother's misfortunes, was returning from a neighbouring fair, just as this inhuman plan was put in execution. —He heard the cries of a woman in distress, and followed the sound, till he arrived at a chaise in waiting, and saw Matilda placed in it, by the side of two men, who presented pistols to him, as he offered to approach and expostulate.

The farmer, uncertain who this female was, yet went to the house she had been taken from (as the nearest) with the tale of what he had seen ; and there, being informed it was Lady Matilda whom he had beheld, this intelligence, joined to the powerful effect her screams had on him, made him resolve to take horse immediately, and with some friends, fol-

low the carriage till they should trace the place to which she was conveyed.

The anxiety, the firmness discovered in determining on this undertaking, somewhat alleviated the agony Miss Woodley endured, and she began to hope, timely assistance might yet be given to her beloved charge.

The man set out, meaning at all events to attempt her release; but before he had proceeded far, the few friends that accompanied him, began to reflect on the improbability of their success, against a nobleman, surrounded by servants, with other attendants likewise, and, perhaps, even countenanced by the father of the lady, whom they presumed to take from him;—or if not, while Lord Elmwood beheld the offence with indifference, that

Indifference gave it a sanction, they might in vain oppose.—These cool reflections tending to their safety, had their weight with the companions of the farmer; they all rode back, rejoicing at their second thoughts, and left him to pursue his journey and prove his valour by himself.

CHAPTER IX.

IT was not with Sandford, as it had lately been with Rushbrook under the displeasure of Lord Elmwood—to the latter he behaved, as soon as their dissension was past, as if it had never happened—but to Sandford it was otherwise—the resentment which he had repressed at the time of the offence, lurked in his heart, and dwelt upon his mind for several days; during which, he carefully avoided exchanging a word with him, and gave every other demonstration of his anger.

Sandford, though experienced in the cruelty and ingratitude of the world, yet
1 could

could not without difficulty brook this severity, this contumely, from a man; for whose welfare, ever since his infancy, he had laboured; and whose happiness was more dear to him, in spite of all his faults, than that of any other person.—Even Lady Matilda was not so dear to Sandford as her father—and he loved her more that she was Lord Elmwood's child, than for any other cause.

Sometimes the old man, incensed beyond bearing, was on the point of saying to his patron, “How, in my age, dare you thus treat the man, whom in his youth you respected and revered?”

Sometimes instead of anger, he felt the tear, he was ashamed to own, steal to his eye, and even fall down his cheek.—Sometimes he left the room half de-

terminated to leave the house—but these were all half determinations; for he knew him with whom he had to deal much too well, not to know that he might be provoked into yet greater anger; and that should he once rashly quit his house, the doors most probably would be shut against him for ever.

In this humiliating state (for even many of the domestics could not but observe their Lord's displeasure) Sandford passed three days, and was beginning the fourth, when sitting with him and Rushbrook just after breakfast, a servant entered, saying, as he opened the door, to somebody who followed, "You must wait till you have my Lord's permission."

This

This attracted their eyes to the door, and a man meanly dressed, walked in, following close to the servant.

The latter turned, and seemed again to desire the person to retire, but in vain; he rushed forward regardless of his opposer, and in great agitation, cried,

“ My Lord, if you please, I have business with you, provided you will chuse to be alone.”

Lord Elmwood, struck with the stranger’s earnestness, bade the servant leave the room; and then said to him,

“ You may speak before these gentlemen.”

The man instantly turned pale, and trembled—then, to prolong the time before he spoke, went to the door to see if it was shut—returned—yet still trembling, seemed unwilling to say his errand.

“What have you done,” cried Lord Elmwood, “that you are in this terror? What have you done, man?”

“Nothing, my Lord,” replied he, “but I am afraid I am going to offend you.”

“Well, no matter;” (he answered carelessly) “only go on, and let me know your business.”

The man’s distress increased—and he cried in a voice of grief and affright—
“Your child, my Lord!”——

Rushbrook and Sandford started; and looking at Lord Elmwood, saw him turn white as death.—In a tremulous voice he instantly cried,

“What of her?” and rose from his seat.

Encouraged

Encouraged by the question, the poor man gave way to his feelings, and answered with every sign of sorrow,

“ I saw her, my Lord, taken away by force—two ruffians seized and carried her away, while she screamed in vain to me for help, and tore her hair in distraction.”

“ Man, what do you mean ?” cried the Earl.

“ Lord Margrave,” replied the stranger, “ we have no doubt, has formed this plot—he has for some time past beset the house where she lived ; and when his visits were refused, he threatened this.—Besides, one of his servants attended the carriage ; I saw, and knew him.”

Lord Elmwood listened to the last part of this account with seeming composure—then turning hastily to Rushbrook, he said,

“ Where

“ Where are my pistols, Harry ? ”

Sandford rose from his seat, and forgetting all the anger between them, caught hold of the Earl's hand, and cried, “ Will you then prove yourself a father ? ”

Lord Elmwood only answered, “ Yes.” and left the room.

Rushbrook followed, and begged with all the earnestness he felt, to be permitted to accompany his uncle.

While Sandford shook hands with the farmer a thousand times ; and he, in his turn rejoiced, as if he had already seen Lady Matilda restored to liberty.

Rushbrook in vain entreated Lord Elmwood ; he laid his commands upon him not to stir from the castle ; while the
agita-

agitation of his own mind, was too great, to observe the rigour of this sentence upon his nephew.

During the hasty preparations for his departure, Sandford received from Miss Woodley the sad intelligence of what had happened ;—but he returned an answer to recompence her for all she had, undergone.

Within a few hours Lord Elmwood set off, accompanied by his guide the farmer, and other attendants furnished with all requisites to ascertain the success of their enterprise—while poor Matilda little thought of a deliverer nigh, much less, that her deliverer should prove her father.

CHAPTER X.

LORD Margrave, black as this incident of his life must make him appear to the reader, still nursed in his conscience a reserve of specious virtue, to keep him in peace with himself.—It was his design to plead, to argue, to implore, nay even to threaten, long before he put his threats in force;—and with this and the following reflection, he reconciled—as most bad men can—what he had done, not only to the laws of humanity, but to the laws of honour.

“ I have stolen a woman certainly;”
said he to himself, “ but I will make
her

her happier than she was in that humble state from which I have taken her.—I will even,” said he, “now that she is in my power, win her affections—and when, in fondness, hereafter she hangs upon me, how will she thank me for this little trial, through which I shall have conducted her to happiness!”

Thus did he hush his remorse, while he waited impatiently at home, in expectation of his prize.

Half expiring with her sufferings, of body as well as of mind, about twelve o'clock the next night, Matilda arrived; and felt her spirits revive by the superior sufferings that awaited her—for her increasing terrors roused her from the death-like weakness, brought on by fatigue.

Lord

Lord Margrave's house, to which he had gone previous to this occasion, was situated in the lonely part of a well-known forest, not more than twenty miles distant from London:—this was an estate he rarely visited; and as he had but few servants here, it was a place which he supposed would be less the object of suspicion in the present case, than any other of his seats. To this, then, Lady Matilda was conveyed—a superb apartment allotted her—and one of his confidential females placed to attend upon her, with all respect, and assurances of safety.

Matilda looked in this woman's face, and seeing she bore the features of her sex, while her knowledge reached none of those worthless characters of which this person was a specimen, she imagined that

that none of those could look as she did, and therefore found consolation in her seeming tenderness.—She was even prevailed upon (by her promises to sit by her side and watch) to throw herself on the bed, and suffer sleep for a few minutes—for sleep to her was suffering; her fears giving birth to dreams terrifying as her waking thoughts.

More wearied than refreshed with her sleep, she rose at break of day, and refusing to admit of the change of an article in her dress, she persisted to sit in the torn disordered habit in which she had been dragged away; nor would she taste a morsel, of all the delicacies that were prepared for her.

Her attendant, for some time observed the most reverential awe; but finding this

this had not the effect of gaining compliance with her advice, she varied her manners, and began by less submissive means to attempt an influence.—She said her orders were to be obedient, while she herself was obeyed—at least in circumstances so material as the lady's health, of which she had the charge as a physician, and expected equal compliance from her patient—food and fresh apparel she prescribed as the only means to prevent death; and even threatened her invalid with something worse, a visit from Lord Margrave, if she continued obstinate.

Now loathing her for the deception she had practised, more, than had she received her thus at first, Matilda hid her eyes from the sight of her; and when she was obliged to look, she shuddered.

This

This female at length thought it her duty to wait upon her worthy employer, and inform him the young lady in her trust would certainly die, unless there were means employed to oblige her to take some nourishment.

Lord Margrave, glad of an opportunity that might apologize for his intrusion upon Lady Matilda, went with eagerness to her apartment, and throwing himself at her feet, conjured her if she would save his life, as well as her own, to submit to be consoled.

The extreme disgust and horror his presence inspired, caused Matilda for a moment to forget all her weakness, her want of health, her want of power; and rising from the place where she sat, she cried, with her voice elevated,

“Leave me, my Lord, or I’ll die in spite of all your care; I’ll instantly expire with grief, if you do not leave me.”

Accustomed to the tears and reproaches of the sex—though not of any like her—he treated with contempt those menaces of anger, and seizing her hand, carried it to his lips.

Enraged, and overwhelmed with sorrow at the affront, she cried, (forgetting every other friend she had,) “Oh! my dear Miss Woodley, why are you not here to take my part?”

“Nay,” returned Lord Margrave, stifling a fit of laughter, “I should think the old priest, would be as good a champion as the lady.”

The

The memory of Sandford with all his kindness, now rushed so forcibly on Matilda's mind, that she shed a shower of tears, on thinking how much he felt; and would continue to feel, for her situation. — Once she thought on Rushbrook too, and thought even *he* would be vexed for her. — Of her father she did not think — she dared not — one single time that thought intruded, but she hurried it away — it was too bitter.

It was now quite night again; and near to that hour when she came first to the house. — Lord Margrave, though at some distance from her, remained still in her apartment, while her female companion had stolen away. — His insensibility to her lamentations — the agitated looks he sometimes cast upon her — her

weak and defenceless state, all conspired to fill her mind with horror.

He saw her apprehensions in her distracted face, disheveled hair, and the whole of her forlorn appearance — yet, notwithstanding his former resolutions, he could not resist the desire of fulfilling all her dreadful expectations.

He once again approached her, and again was going to seize her hand; when the report of a pistol, and a confusion of persons assembling towards the apartment prevented him.

He started — but looked more surprised than alarmed — her alarm was augmented; for she supposed this tumult was some experiment to intimidate her into submission. — She wrung her hands, and

and lifted up her eyes to heaven, in the last agony of despair, when one of Lord Margrave's servants entered hastily and announced,

"Lord Elmwood."

That moment her father entered—and with all the unrestrained fondness of a parent, folded her in his arms."

Her extreme, her excess of joy on such a meeting, and from such anguish rescued, was, in part, repressed by his awful presence. — The apprehensions to which she had been accustomed, kept her timid and doubtful — she feared to speak, or clasp him in return for his embrace, but falling on her knees, clung round his legs, and bathed his feet with her tears. — These were the happiest moments that she had ever known — perhaps too, the happiest *he* had ever known.

Lord Margrave, on whom Lord Elmwood had not even cast a look, now left the room; but as he quitted it, called out,

“ My Lord Elmwood, if you have any demands on me,”——

The Earl interrupted him,—“ Would you make me an executioner? The law shall be your only antagonist.”

Matilda, quite exhausted, yet upheld by the sudden transport she had felt, was led by her father out of this wretched dwelling—more despicable than the cottage built with clay.

CHAPTER XI.

OVERCOME with the want of rest for two nights from her cruel fears, and all those fears now hushed; Matilda soon after she was placed in the carriage with Lord Elmwood, dropped fast asleep, and thus insensibly surprised, leaned her head against her father in the sweetest slumber that imagination can conceive.

When she awoke, instead of the usual melancholy scene before her view, she heard the voice of the once dreaded Lord Elmwood tenderly saying,

“ We will go no further to-night, the fatigue is too much for her ; — order

beds here directly, and some proper person to sit up and attend her?"

She could only turn to him with a look of love and duty; her lips could not utter a sentence.

In the morning she found her father by the side of her bed.—He inquired "If she was in health sufficient to pursue her journey, or if she would remain where she was?"

"I am able to go with you," she answered instantly.

"Nay," replied he, "perhaps you ought to stay here till you are better?"

"I *am* better," said she, "and ready to go with you."—Half afraid that he meant to send her from him.

He perceived her fears, and replied, "Nay, if you stay, so shall I—and
when

when I go, I shall take you along with me to my house."

"To Elmwood House?" she asked eagerly.

"No, to my house in town, where I intend to be all the winter, and where we shall live together."

She turned her face on the pillow to conceal her tears of joy, but her sobs revealed them.

"Come," said he, "this kiss is a token you have nothing to fear."—And he kissed her affectionately.—"I shall send for Miss Woodley too immediately," continued he.

"Oh! I shall be overjoyed to see her, my Lord—and to see Mr. Sandford—and even Mr. Rushbrook."

"Do you know him?" said Lord Elmwood.

"Yes,"

"Yes," she replied, "I have seen him two or three times."

The Earl hoping the air might be a means of re-establishing her strength and spirits, now left the room and ordered his carriage; while she arose, attended by one of his female servants, for whom he had sent to town, to bring such changes of apparel as were requisite.

When Matilda was ready to join her father in the next room, she felt a tremor seize her, that made it almost impossible to appear before him.—No other circumstance now impending to agitate her heart, she felt more forcibly its embarrassment at meeting on terms of easy intercourse, him, of whom she had been

used to think, but with that distant reverence and fear, which his severity had excited; and she knew not how she should dare to speak to, or look on him, with that freedom her affection warranted.

After several efforts to conquer these nice and refined sensations, but to no purpose, she went at last to his apartment. — He was reading; but as she entered, he put out his hand and drew her to him. — Her tears wholly overcame her. — He could have intermingled his—but assuming a grave countenance, he commanded her to desist from exhausting her spirits; and, after a few powerful struggles with herself, she obeyed.

Before the morning was over, she experienced

perienced the extreme joy of sitting by her father's side as they drove to town, and of receiving during his conversation, a thousand proofs of his love, and tokens of her lasting happiness.

It was now the middle of November; and yet, as Matilda passed along, never to her, did the sun rise upon a morning such as this — never did her imagination comprehend, that the human heart could feel happiness true and genuine as hers.

On arriving at the house, there was no abatement of her felicity. — All was respect and duty on the part of the domestics — all paternal care on the part of Lord Elmwood; — and she seemed to be at that summit of her wishes which annihilates

annihilates hope; but that the prospect of seeing Miss Woodley and Mr. Sandford, still kept this pleasing passion in existence.

CHAPTER XII.

RUSHBROOK was detained at Elmwood House during all this time, more from the persuasions, nay prayers, of Sandford, than the commands of Lord Elmwood. He had, but for Sandford, followed his uncle and exposed himself to his anger, sooner than have endured the most piercing inquietude, which he was doomed to suffer, till the news arrived of Lady Matilda's safety.—He indeed had little else to fear from the known, firm, courageous character of her father, and the expedition with which he undertook his journey; but lover's fears are like those of women, and no argument

argument could persuade either him or Miss Woodley (who had now ventured to come to Elmwood House) but that Matilda's peace of mind might be forever destroyed, before she was set at liberty.

The summons from Lord Elmwood for their coming to town, was received by each of this party with delight; but the impatience to obey it, was in Rushbrook so violent, it was painful to himself, and extremely troublesome to Sandford; who wished, from his regard to Lady Matilda, rather to delay, than hurry their journey.

"You are to blame," said he to him and Miss Woodley, "to wish by your arrival, to divide with Lord Elmwood that tender bond, which ties the good who confer obligations, to the object of their

their benevolence. — At present there is no one with him to share in the care and protection of his daughter, and he is under the necessity of discharging that duty himself; this habit may become so powerful, that he *cannot* throw it off, even if his former resolutions urge him to it. — While we remain here, therefore, Lady Matilda is quite safe; but it would not surprise me, if on our arrival (especially if we are precipitate) her father should place her again with Miss Woodley at a distance.”

To this forcible conjecture, they submitted for a few days, and then most gladly set out for town.

On their arrival, they were met, even at the door of the street, by Lady Matilda; and with an expression of joy, they did not suppose her features could have

have worn.—She embraced Miss Woodley ! hung upon Sandford !—and to Mr. Rushbrook, who from his conscious love, only bowed at an humble distance, she held out her hand with every look and gesture of the tenderest esteem.

When Lord Elmwood joined them, he welcomed them all sincerely ; but Sandford the most, with whom he had not spoken for many days before he left the country, for his allusion to the wretched situation of his daughter.—And Sandford (with his fellow travellers) now saw him treat this daughter with an easy, a natural fondness, as if she had lived with him from her infancy. — He appeared, however, at times, under the apprehension, that the propensity of man to jealousy, might give Rushbrook a pang at this dangerous rival in his love and fortune.

tune — for though Lord Elmwood remembered well the hazard he had once ventured to befriend Matilda, yet the present unlimited reconciliation was something so unlooked for, it might be a trial too much for his generosity, to remain wholly disinterested on the event. — Slight as was this suspicion, it did Rushbrook injustice. — He loved Lady Matilda too sincerely, he loved her father's happiness, and her mother's memory too faithfully, not to be rejoiced at all he witnessed; nor could the secret hope that whispered him, " Their blessings might one day be mutual," increase the pleasure he found, in beholding Matilda happy.

Unexpected affairs in which Lord Elmwood had been for some time en-

gaged, diverted his attention for a while from the marriage of his nephew; nor did he at this time find his disposition sufficiently severe, to exact from the young man a compliance with his wishes, at so cruel an alternative as that of being for ever discarded. — He felt his mind, by the late incident, too much softened for such harshness; he yet wished for the alliance he had proposed; for he was more consistent in his character than to suffer the tenderness his daughter's peril had awakened, to derange those plans which he had so long projected. Never for a moment did he indulge — for perhaps it would have been an indulgence — the idea of replacing her exactly in the rights of her birth, to the disappointment of all his nephew's expectations.

Milder now in his temper than he had been for years before, and knowing he could be no longer irritated upon the subject of his daughter, he once more resolved to trust himself in a conference with Rushbrook on the subject of marriage; meaning at the same time to mention Matilda as an opponent from whom he had nothing to fear. But for some time before Rushbrook was called to this private audience, he had by his unwearied attention, endeavoured to impress upon Matilda's mind, the softest sentiments in his favour.—He succeeded—but not as he wished.—She loved him as her friend, her cousin, her foster brother, but not as a lover.—The idea of love never once came to her thoughts; and she would sport with Rushbrook like the most harmless child, while he, all impassioned, could with difficulty resist

result telling her, what she made him suffer.

At the meeting between him and Lord Elmwood, to which he was called, for his final answer on that subject which had once nearly proved so fatal to him; after a thousand fears, much confusion and embarrassment, he at length frankly confessed his "Heart was engaged, and had been so, long before his uncle offered to direct his choice."

Lord Elmwood desired to know "On whom he had placed his affections."

"I dare not tell you, my Lord,"—returned he, infinitely confused; "but Mr. Sandford can witness their sincerity, and how long they have been fixed."

"Fixed!" cried the Earl.

"Immoveably fixed, my Lord; and yet the object is as unconscious of it to

this moment as you yourself have been ; and I swear ever shall be so, without your permission."

" Name the object." said Lord Elmwood, anxiously.

" My Lord, I dare not—the last time I named her to you, you threatened to abandon me for my arrogance."

Lord Elmwood started. — " My daughter !—Would you marry her ?"

" But with your approbation, my Lord ; and that —"

Before he could proceed a word further, his uncle left the room hastily—and left Rushbrook all terror for his approaching fate.

Lord Elmwood went immediately into the apartment where Sandford, Miss Woodley, and Matilda, were sitting, and
cried

cried with an angry voice and with his countenance disordered,

“Rushbrook has offended me beyond forgiveness. — Go, Sandford, to the library, where he is, and tell him this instant to quit my house, and never dare to return.”

Miss Woodley lifted up her hands and sighed.

Sandford rose slowly from his seat to execute his office.

While Lady Matilda, who was arranging her music books upon the instrument, stopped from her employment suddenly, with her face bathed in tears.

A general silence ensued, till Lord Elmwood, resuming his angry tone, cried, “Did you hear me, Mr. Sandford?”

L. 4

Sand-

Sandford now, without a word in reply, made for the door—but there Mxtilda impeded him, and throwing her arms about his neck, cried,

“Dear Mr. Sandford, do not.”

“How!” exclaimed her father.

She saw the impending frown, and rushing towards him, took his hand fearfully, and knelt at his feet.—“Mr. Rushbrook is my relation,” she cried in a pathetic voice, “my companion, my friend—before you loved me he was anxious for my happiness, and often visited me to lament with, and console me.—I cannot see him turned out of your house without feeling for him, what he once felt for me.”

Lord Elmwood turned aside to conceal his sensations—then raising her from the floor, he said, “Do you know what he has asked of me?”

“No,”

"No," answered she in the utmost ignorance, and with the utmost innocence painted on her face;—"but whatever it is, my Lord, though you do not grant it, yet pardon him for asking."

"Perhaps you would grant him what he has requested?" said her father.

"Most willingly—was it in my gift."

"It is," replied he. "Go to him in the library, and hear what he has to say;—for on your will his fate shall depend."

Like lightning she flew out of the room; while even the grave Sandford smiled at the idea of their meeting.

Rushbrook, with his fears all verified by the manner in which his uncle had left him, sat with his head reclined against a bookcase, and every limb extended with the despair that had seized him.

Malinda

Matilda nimbly opened the door and cried, " Mr. Rushbrook, I am come to comfort you."

" That you have always done," said he, rising in rapture to receive her, even in the midst of all his sadness.

" What is it you want?" said she.
" What have you asked of my father that he has denied you?"

" I have asked for that," replied he,
" which is dearer to me than my life."

" Be satisfied then," returned she,
" for you shall have it."

" Dear Matilda! it is not in your power to bestow."

" But he has told me it *shall* be in my power; and has desired me to give, or to refuse it you, at my own pleasure."

" O Heavens!" cried Rushbrook in transport, " Has he?"

" He

“ He has indeed — before Mr. Sandford and Miss Woodley. — Now tell me what your petition is ? ”

“ I asked him,” cried Rushbrook, trembling, “ for a wife.”

Her hand that had just then taken hold of his, in the warmth of her wish to serve him, now dropped down as with the stroke of death—her face lost its colour — and she leaned against the desk by which they were standing, without uttering a word.

“ What means this change ? ” said he ;
“ Do you not wish me happy ? ”

“ Yes.” she exclaimed : “ Heaven is my witness. — But it gives me concern to think we must part.”

“ Then let us be joined,” cried he, falling at her feet, “ till death alone can part us.”

All

All the sensibility and the reserve — the pride, with which she was so amply possessed, returned to her that moment. She started and cried, "Could Lord Elmwood know for what he sent me?" "He did," replied Rushbrook. "I boldly told him of my presumptuous love, and he has given to you alone, the power over my happiness or misery. — Oh! do not doom me to the latter."

Whether the heart of Matilda, such as it has been described, *could* sentence him to misery, the reader is left to surmise — and if he supposes that it could *not*, he has every reason to suppose that their wedded life, *was* — a life of happiness.

He has beheld the pernicious effects of an *improper education* in the destiny
 1 which

which attended the unthinking Miss Milner — On the opposite side, what may not be hoped from that school of prudence — though of adversity — in which Matilda was bred?

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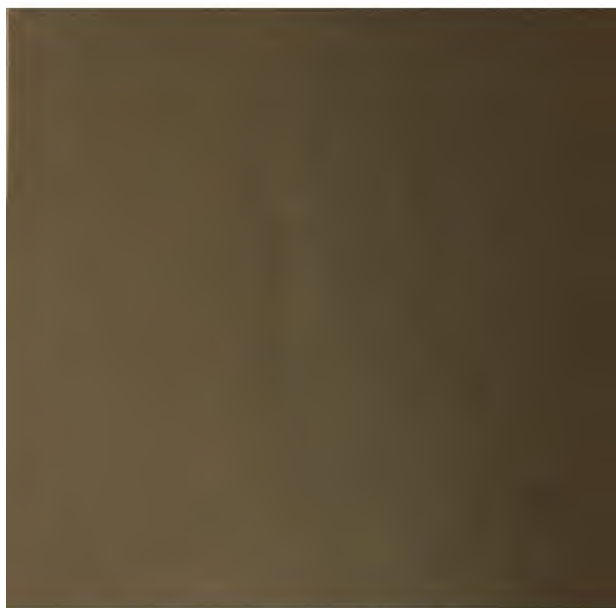
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